Final Technical Report for the Project:

NEARSHORE WAVE PROCESSES, N00014-94-1-1185

Long Term Goal

The long term goal of this project was to obtain accurate, detailed predictions of wave properties in the nearshore given the incident wave conditions and local bathymetry, and thus allow for confident simulation of the forcing mechanisms in models that couple wave-driven flows, sediment transport, and changing bathymetry. For the last three years efforts have been focussed on analyzing wave observations made in the Duck94 field experiment and obtaining new observations during the SandyDuck field experiment.

Analysis of Duck94 Observations

One-dimensional Boussinesq shoaling wave models have been compared with observations made on the cross-shore transect of the Duck94 pilot experiment (Elgar et al. 1997, Chen et al. 1997, Norheim et al. 1997). The momentum balance described by the shallow water equations was verified by comparison with mean longshore currents observed along the Duck94 transect (Fedderson et al. 1997). A 1D morphological evolution model was shown to predict the offshore sandbar migration observed in Duck94 (Gallagher et al. 1997).

SandyDuck Field Experiment

The evolution of waves, currents, and bathymetry on a natural beach is being observed during the SandyDuck field experiment on the North Carolina coast. Pressure gages, current meters, and sonar altimeters were deployed in July 1997 on a two-dimensional grid extending 370 m from near the shoreline to about 5 m water depth and spanning 200 m along the coast. The grid is large enough to sample significant bathymetric inhomogeneities and their effects on wave evolution and circulation. Data have been acquired nearly continuously for more than 3 months (Aug – Nov 1997) and data return is greater than 97%. Significant processing is performed in near-real time, and maps of nearshore wave heights and directions, bathymetry, mean flows, and setup every 3 hours for 120 days have been produced. The spatially extensive instrument arrays will allow quantitative investigations of sea and swell, edge waves, shear waves, alongshore inhomogeneous circulation, and changing morphology.

A Boussinesq model for the nonlinear evolution of nonbreaking, directionally spread waves will be tested by comparison with the array observations. The model will be initialized with wave directional spectra estimated from pressure sensor array data acquired in 8-m water depth, and model predictions will be compared with wave observations at shallower depths.

A cross-shore transect of buried (to avoid flow-induced pressures) Paros pressure gages provides estimates of the wave-breaking induced setup. The observations will be compared with models for setup and with the corresponding offshore directed near-bottom flows (undertow).

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	15 Jan 1999	Final 1 Sep 94 - 31 Aug 97

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

Nearshore Wave Processes

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

N00014-94-1-1185

6. AUTHOR(S)

S. Elgar

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAMES(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Washington State University
Pullman, WA 99164

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAMES(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Office of Naval Research
800 N. Quincy
Arlington, VA 22217

10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Approved for public release

12. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 words)*

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14. SUBJECT TERMS

Surf zone, waves, currents, nearshore

15. NUMBER OF PAGES

5

16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UL